

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor McGrath and Members of City Council

FROM: Frank Bruno, City Manager
Stephanie Grainger, Deputy City Manager
Jean Gatzka, Community Sustainability Coordinator

DATE: January 3, 2008

SUBJECT: January 15, 2008 Study Session on the 2007 Community Dialogue Initiative

I. PURPOSE

This study session is intended to provide City Council with the results and final reports for both of the 2007 community dialogue components: the community survey and community dialogue meetings.

The 2007 community dialogue initiative was comprised of two parallel approaches and processes – a community survey and dialogue meetings (Meetings-in-a-Box – MIB). Council identified the purpose of the community dialogue initiative as: *to become attuned to the opinions and needs of the community, including those who don't typically participate in city government, on a broad range of issues and to help identify the desires for the future 'look and feel' of Boulder.*

The dual approach to the initiative was to include the survey as a scientifically valid sample of randomly selected people and complement this information with the dialogue meetings to garner more qualitative information targeting segments of the population that do not typically participate in traditional outreach efforts. Both efforts were intended to gather initial information about what issues are important to people that would inform additional more in-depth engagement or public process to find out more about why and what the city could do to address these issues.

Both respondents of the survey and dialogue participants rated quality of life in Boulder very high (91-95%) however the reports show that there are several issues of concern to people in Boulder. Some of the issues raised were similar in both the survey and dialogue meetings, but there were different issues raised by the dialogue meeting participants than those rated of importance on the survey. The open-ended nature of the dialogue meetings allowed for participants to raise any issue of importance, where the survey typically included lists of topics or issues for respondents to rate.

Attachment A includes three tables comparing the responses to key questions from both the survey and dialogue meetings in a box (MIB). The summary reports for both processes are included in Attachment B (Survey) and Attachment C (Meetings-in-a-Box). Attachment D includes a brief 'Capsule Report' summarizing the Meeting in a Box results that will be distributed to dialogue participants.

II. QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

1. Does Council have questions about the community survey or dialogue process or results?
2. What additional information would be useful to Council regarding either the community survey or community dialogue meetings?
3. Does City Council have guidance for staff on potential next steps?

III. BACKGROUND

At the 2006 City Council retreat, interest was expressed in furthering the city's social sustainability goals and outreach processes and Council members introduced the idea of a community dialogue process. Council's interest was in hearing from the community about the issues and concerns it thinks the city should address. Over the next year and a half, the process was further defined.

The first phase of the community dialogue initiative was comprised of two approaches and processes – a community survey and dialogue meetings (“meetings-in-a-box”). The purpose of combining these efforts was to provide a complete picture of community values and issues. The survey provides a scientifically based, quantifiable random sample of responses. The dialogue meetings provide qualitative responses from many groups and individuals in the community, focusing on those who do not typically engage with city government or to ‘fill gaps’ of public input.

The first phase of the community dialogue effort was envisioned as an incremental step toward connecting with those residents who are hard to reach or who don't typically participate in local government decision-making processes. The purpose was to hear from the community and engage with them in a very different way than had been done to date. It was envisioned to be the beginning of ongoing engagement process where the city will continue to engage the community, build new relationships to inform future processes so the city can continue the relationships, and to emphasize Boulder's intention to become a more inclusive community. The reports were to be used as reference documents to inform future policy and decision making, including processes, strategic plans, master plans and city priorities through the business plan process.

Two consultants were selected to assist in these efforts: National Research Center (NRC) for the survey and Kezziah Watkins, for the dialogue meetings. The consultants worked with staff and City Council to develop a coordinated approach to meet the goals of the initiative, building on the strengths inherent in the different types of community engagement. The list of questions to be used for both venues was crafted with input from City Council, boards and commissions, and city staff.

The community survey was mailed to over 3,000 households and also over 400 CU students living in on-campus dormitories. The survey included many questions that have been asked on previous surveys (baseline questions) and continue an established trend line. In addition, some new topics specific to this community dialogue initiative were also included. The response rate was between 26 % and 30% and according to NRC this is a good rate of response return for the survey. The best practices for administering a survey were conducted and NRC considers the results of the survey to be highly reliable data representing the views of the community.

The meetings-in-a-box (MIB) were small, self-directed group meetings hosted by individuals, organizations, groups or businesses without elected officials, staff or facilitators present. These meetings were used to explore topics related to the beliefs, values and experiences of participants. The staff worked with individuals and groups to recruit hosts and solicit interest in the project. We targeted specific groups that do not traditionally participate in public processes but worked with many groups and individuals to get a wide range of people participating. Twenty seven meetings were held.

Both the survey and the MIBs were geared to reach under-represented populations. Many of the dialogue meetings were held by groups including non-English speaking residents and students. Also, both an English and Spanish version of the survey was mailed to each randomly-selected household.

IV. ISSUES / ANALYSIS

What We Heard From the Two Reports

Generally the survey and dialogue responses about quality of life in Boulder were positive: both respondents of the survey and dialogue participants rated quality of life in Boulder very high (91-95% "good" or "very good") as well as high ratings for the quality of neighborhoods (82-90% "good" or "very good"). Ratings of 'overall city government operations' had 71% responding "very good" or "good" which is higher than previous survey results.

Tables comparing responses to key questions for both the survey and meetings are included in Attachment A. *The City of Boulder 2007 Community Survey Report of Results* is included in Attachment B. It provides an overview of the results by issue area as well as tables outlining the results by geographic area and demographic subgroups. *The Community Dialogue: Meetings in a Box Summary Report* is included in Attachment C and includes results of all participants but also breaks out the information by: 'General Community Groups', 'Spanish Language / Immigrant Interest Groups' and 'University of Colorado Students Groups'.

Both reports present a wealth of information that will be important for all areas of city government. A few issues or items of interest are listed below. Please note that this is just a sampling of many issues evaluated and the full survey report and community dialogue summary report should be reviewed to obtain a complete picture of the results and many of the issues identified will require additional outreach to find out why people responded the way they did.

- Input regarding cost of living, raising children and youth, race relations and safety expressed in the MIBs was different and more critical than the information received from survey respondents. This is consistent with the public input received when developing the Social Sustainability Strategic Plan (available on the city's website under Community Sustainability). Although many efforts are currently underway to address these concerns and issues, these results indicate that more work could be done in these areas. At a minimum, greater outreach with the community can be done about the city's anti-bias hotline, anti-bias ordinance, Human Relations Commission, and services/programs and opportunities available to provide a "safe" place for members of the community to communicate with the city.

- 37% of survey respondents rated race relations in Boulder as “very good” or “good” and for MIB participants between 16% and 21% rated “very good” or “good” with Spanish Language / Immigrant Interests groups at 16%. Lack of diversity was frequently noted in the MIB responses and people indicated that Boulder’s social climate is not welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds or beliefs. Among survey respondents, 74% of non-Hispanic white respondents indicated they feel “very safe” or “somewhat safe” from discrimination due to race or ethnic background, however 54% of those with other ethnic backgrounds indicate they feel safe from racial or ethnic discrimination.
- 60% of survey respondents feel that there are “somewhat too few” or “far too few” job opportunities in Boulder and participants in the MIB said that protecting or assisting local businesses as well as increasing the availability of jobs is a primary concern. 74% of survey respondents consider “providing assistance to businesses to keep them in Boulder” to be “very or somewhat important.”
- People’s comments in the MIBs indicated they wanted to be heard by local government, appreciated this opportunity and hoped that the city will act on their issues. 37% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “most elected officials care what people like me think”. As we use this information and develop next steps for additional engagement, it will be important to demonstrate to the public that City Council and city staff have heard people’s values and issues raised in these forums and that the city will act on them.
- 98% of survey respondents have access to a computer and 98% of those have access to the internet (overall 96% have access to the internet). 65% had accessed the city website in the past year (up from 35% in 2001) indicating that many Boulderites can and do access city information from the website. 72% indicated that they would be likely to obtain information from the city of Boulder website if they were interested in an issue.

The survey included three questions about key policy issues intended to be a ‘pulse check’ on the city’s approach to these issues. These included:

- Options for the Planning Reserve
72 % of respondents “strongly support” or “somewhat support” the statement “do not annex these lands; there is enough room for redevelopment within city limits.” On other options listed for potential uses for which to annex and develop the planning reserve, respondents indicated varying degrees of support (e.g. 64% indicated support for annexing the planning reserve for development of cultural institutions.)
- Prairie dog management
70% of respondents expressed agreement that “the city spends too much money trying to relocate and contain prairie dogs” and three quarters agreed at least somewhat that “it is unrealistic to control prairie dogs without the use of human extermination methods.”
- Residential home expansions (“pops” & “scrapes”)
The responses to all the statements offered regarding this issue present a wide range of views and also reflect the multi-faceted nature of this issue. For example: 70% of survey

respondents indicate agreement that "home expansions are good for the community because they update the housing" but also 58% indicate agreement that "home expansions are a problem because they reduce the amount of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income people."

At the study session, staff can discuss with Council the next steps for focusing on items from both the survey and MIBs with which people expressed the most dissatisfaction or were of greatest concern.

Observations About The Outreach Methods And Participation

NRC received 870 completed surveys; a 30% response rate which is considered good by the survey consultant. Very few Spanish responses to the survey were received. Even though we did not receive many responses, staff feels it was useful to include a Spanish language version of the survey and continuing efforts to engage and reach out to non-English speaking residents is important to continue to build trust and awareness that the city seeks the views of the entire community, especially those that do not typically participate in traditional means. This also indicates the need to provide other outreach efforts that specifically engage non-English speakers and other typically under-represented populations.

There were twenty seven completed dialogue meetings. The meeting-in-a-box method worked well for typically under-participating groups or parts of the community (e.g. immigrants, non-English speaking). This was the first time this method was used and as the community becomes more aware that the city is doing different kinds of outreach, it may result in more interest and support if used again for other processes.

CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

As crafted in August 2007, the community survey and meetings-in-a-box were intended to be the first phase of a continuing effort to engage the community. The results of both efforts provide a rich source of insight into the priority issues and concerns of Boulder residents. As originally designed, these insights would inform the type of information and specific issue areas that City Council may want to address or discuss with the public in the next phase of the community dialogue.

For the second phase, the dialogue consultants had proposed what they term 'community connector' meetings which are organized similarly to the meetings-in-a-box where groups, organizations or individuals invite attendees to small meetings, but instead of the meetings being self-directed, they would include a staff presentation on a specific topic or set of topics and allow for a more complex discussion with questions and answers. Community connector meetings are similar to meetings-in-a-box in that they are personally hosted by individuals, organizations, groups or businesses and may be targeted to hard to reach populations, but they are used to solicit informed judgment from participants rather than opinion. They are led and documented by facilitators, with information presented in advance (i.e., fact sheets or other written materials) or presented by staff, where appropriate. However, since this direction was set by the prior City Council, staff wants to check in with council on whether it would like to consider this outreach method or others that may be more appropriate to address and inform the issues it feels need to be further addressed.

The summary reports have been distributed to staff throughout the organization and to the public via the city's website. We will work to further explore issues raised by the community to identify issues or areas where we need additional public engagement and outreach efforts to more fully understand why people said what they did.

City Council initiatives often have their own public processes. Both the MIB or community connector meeting format could be used for specific topics if appropriate. As City Council and staff considers key issues and projects in 2008, we may be able to tailor public processes and outreach efforts that are already anticipated to further explore key issues or concerns raised in the survey and dialogue meetings. Potential efforts include:

- Housing and Human Services (HHS), Division of Housing Affordable Housing Goals Dialogue. This effort will report on progress on the affordable housing goals, evaluate the current policies, programs and priorities and include at least one broad forum and several focus groups with relevant stakeholders;
- Work by boards and commissions such as the Climate Action Plan Advisory Group, Immigrant Advisory Committee, the Subcommittee on Inclusiveness and Diversity or the county-wide Human Services Strategic Plan;
- Area Planning efforts or the major update to the BVCP which would begin in 2009;
- Recycling and composting or climate action plan efforts; or
- Transit Village Area Plan Implementation.

If City Council would like to specifically discuss additional outreach efforts to more fully explore some of the results of the survey or dialogue meetings, this may be a good topic for the its upcoming retreat, an additional study session, a regular Council business meeting, or at a Community Sustainability Committee meeting if that structure/forum continues.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT AND IMPACTS:

- **Economic:** There are no direct economic impacts or benefits to the community from the information presented in the reports. The results of the community dialogue efforts and the information in the community survey may influence decision-making regarding the city budget and Boulder's economic vitality efforts.
- **Environmental:** There are no direct environmental impacts or benefits from the information presented in the reports. However, as with council's economic assessment, the results of the community dialogue initiative include issues that may affect decision-making as it relates to environmental sustainability.
- **Social:** The main purpose of the community dialogue was to conduct a public outreach effort with the entire community but with a special focus on under-represented residents, ensuring engagement of a broad spectrum of the community. Longer term benefits will be to develop relationships with people or groups who are typically not involved in city processes. More diverse representation on issues affecting residents should lead to more effective long term policy decisions. The city received positive feedback from MIB participants about this outreach effort. For some it was the first time they had participated in a city sponsored community meeting and they appreciated the opportunity to share their perspectives in a safe forum.

Many of the issues raised by the dialogue participants indicate that there are significant concerns in the community about race relations, the social and political climate and access to services. This information will help staff and decision-makers shape goals, policies and work plans.

OTHER IMPACTS:

- **Fiscal:** \$100,000 was budgeted for the community dialogue (survey and meetings) in 2007. Following year-end accounting close, staff will have more information on remaining funds for additional outreach in 2008 due to delaying the 'community connector' meetings from the first phase of the effort.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A: Tables comparing issues
- B: Community Survey Report by National Research Center (NRC)
- C: Community Dialogue, Meetings in a Box Summary Report by Kezziah Watkins
- D: Community Dialogue, Meetings in a Box Capsule Report

Table 1: Major Issues facing Boulder

Issue	Survey Results	Dialogue - Meetings in a Box (MIB) Results (<i>*language in italics describes the types of responses within the main categories</i>)	Observations on Similarities and Differences
Perceptions about Boulder	<p>Ratings on characteristics of Boulder as a whole (% “good” or “very good”): Recreational opportunities (94%) Opportunities for leisure-time activities (92%) Opportunities for higher learning / continuing education (93%) Dining out opportunities (91%) Opportunities to attend arts and cultural activities (82%) (page 46, question 3, table 8)</p> <p>Boulder has “somewhat or far too little/few”: Racial/ ethnic diversity (73%) Housing affordable to low or moderate income people (72%) People of varied incomes (63%) (page 53, question 6, table 14)</p> <p>71% feel Boulder has “about the right mix of businesses and housing (page 54, question 7, table 15)</p>	<p>Most Frequently Cited in Group Responses (Question 1, page 11): Social climate (<i>activist community; liberal yet lacking inclusivity</i>)</p> <p>Active / healthy lifestyle (<i>good outdoor activities</i>)</p> <p>High cost of living (<i>including lack of affordable housing</i>)</p> <p>Lack of diversity / race relations (<i>not welcoming to those with different ethnicity or other minority characteristic</i>)</p> <p>Environmentally aware</p>	<p>Responses were similar but there was less emphasis on social climate in the survey responses than in the MIB responses.</p> <p>The dialogue participants had time to discuss this question and then had to come to consensus on the top five whereas survey respondents were rating characteristics that were provided.</p>
Things to preserve about the city / Highly valued Boulder attributes	<p>Ratings that adequate measures (“strongly agree” or “agree”) are being taken by city government to: Protect the natural environment (84%) Provide a variety of recreation opportunities (84%) Reduce solid waste and promote recycling (80%) Maintain public infrastructure (62%) Protect the economic health of Boulder (53%) (page 64, question 16, Table 33)</p> <p>88% of people feel safe from violent crimes 69% feel safe from property crimes</p>	<p>Most Frequently Cited in Group Responses (Question 2, page 14): Transportation (<i>transportation system, bus system</i>)</p> <p>Safety (<i>was highest ranked among Spanish speaking and immigrant groups, but not other groups</i>)</p> <p>Community feel (<i>not ‘big city’, good neighborhoods</i>)</p> <p>Quality environment (<i>environmentally conscious</i>)</p>	<p>Protecting the environment and providing good outdoor activities and open space was very important to both survey respondents and dialogue participants.</p> <p>People responding in both venues highly value the city’s transportation system (access to bike paths and public transportation).</p>

Issue	Survey Results	Dialogue - Meetings in a Box (MIB) Results (*language in italics describes the types of responses within the main categories)	Observations on Similarities and Differences
	<p>(page 55, question 9, table 17)</p> <p>City of Boulder has the 'right amount' of:</p> <p>Housing density (59%)</p> <p>Housing, population, non-residential growth rates (51-52%)</p> <p>(Page 53, question 6, table 14)</p>	<p><i>model for energy efficiency)</i></p> <p>Outdoors / open space (<i>parks, access to green space</i>)</p>	
<p>Things to change or add / Improvements for the future</p>	<p>Ratings that adequate measures ("strongly agree" or "agree") are being taken by city government to:</p> <p>Address traffic congestion (29%)</p> <p>Prepare the community for an emergency (32%)</p> <p>Provide access to services for disabled residents (42%)</p> <p>Provide access to basic human services - children, adults, families and seniors (44%)</p> <p>(page 64, question 16, table 33)</p> <p>79% of non-hispanic whites felt safe from discrimination due to race or ethnic background, whereas 52% of other non-white, non-Anglo respondents felt safe from racial or ethnic discrimination.</p> <p>(page 90, question 9, table 73)</p>	<p>Most Frequently Cited in Group Responses (Question 3, page 16):</p> <p>High cost of living (<i>lack of affordable housing, greater access to jobs</i>)</p> <p>Social / political climate (<i>authentic inclusiveness, equitable access to resources / service</i>)</p> <p>Traffic / transportation (<i>more affordable public transportation, more alt modes options</i>)</p> <p>Social cultural amenities (<i>increased access to social services & health care, support for the arts</i>)</p> <p>Diversity – (<i>lack of / increased need for socio-economic diversity and support for local businesses</i>)</p>	<p>For both survey and MIB participants, transportation was both highly valued and seen as an issue that needs continued attention and improvement.</p> <p>Lack of racial and ethnic diversity was identified on both as a concern.</p> <p>Affordable housing was identified on both as a concern.</p>

Issue	Survey Results	Dialogue Meetings in a Box Results <i>(*language in italics describes the types of responses within the main categories)</i>	Observation on Similarities and Differences
<p>What People Value Most</p>	<p>Most frequently cited in “What makes Boulder a great place?:”</p> <p>Natural beauty / Mountains</p> <p>Recreational opportunities / Concerts / Plays</p> <p>Open Space / Trails</p> <p>Schools / University</p> <p>Location / Climate</p> <p>Open-minded / progressive</p> <p>(page 52, Question 5, Table 13)</p> <p>High ratings (“good” or “very good”) of quality in neighborhoods:</p> <p>Access to bus services (85%)</p> <p>Access to parks (84%)</p> <p>Safety of neighborhood (83%)</p> <p>Ease of walking in neighborhood (80%)</p> <p>Access to bike paths (80%)</p> <p>(page 35, question 2, table 4)</p>	<p>Most Frequently Cited in Individual Responses (Question 1, page 18):</p> <p>Active healthy lifestyle & natural environment (<i>outdoor recreation opportunities</i>)</p> <p>Education / University (<i>educated community</i>)</p> <p>Economic sustainability (<i>local businesses, entrepreneurial spirit, access to jobs</i>)</p> <p>Social political climate (<i>value activism, liberal, progressive community</i>)</p> <p>Transportation system (<i>public and alternative transportation options</i>)</p>	<p>Social political climate did not rank as high with survey respondents as with dialogue participants.</p>
<p>What Makes Life Difficult / What Barriers exist in your daily life?</p>	<p>60% of survey respondents feel there are “somewhat too few” or “far too few” job opportunities in Boulder. (page 53, question 6, table 14)</p> <p>49% of survey respondents “feel included as a part of Boulder’s community”. (52% of non-Hispanic whites; 38% of Hispanic or other ethnicity) (page 106, question 15, table 85)</p> <p>41% feel the Boulder community is ‘respectful and accepting of people of differing political opinions’. (page 54, question 8, table 16)</p>	<p>Most Frequently Cited in Individual Responses (Question 2, page 21):</p> <p>High cost of living (<i>general expenses and housing</i>)</p> <p>Social / political climate not inclusive (<i>prevalent elitism, racism</i>)</p> <p>Lack of diversity (<i>lack of cultural related products, lack of commitment to diversity</i>)</p> <p>Traffic / transportation (<i>congestion, buses, parking, safety</i>)</p> <p>Economic sustainability (<i>local businesses, economic stratification, access to jobs</i>)</p>	<p>Similar responses were seen in each.</p>

Table 2: Perceptions of the Community

Issue	Survey Results <i>Question 1, Table 1, page 44</i>	Dialogue Meetings in a Box (MIB) Results <i>Question 4, Page 28</i>	Observation on Similarities and Differences
Overall Quality of Life in Boulder	93% "good" or "very good"	91-95% "good" or "very good"	Very similar responses – survey respondents a bit lower than dialogue participants.
Overall Quality of Neighborhood	87% "good" or "very good"	82-90% "good" or "very good"	Very similar responses; lowest ranking was from CU student groups (82% good or very good)
Place to Raise Children	81% "good" or "very good" 70% "agree" or "strongly agree" "Boulder community is child-friendly"-page44, <i>Question 8, table 15</i>	48-87% "good" or "very good"	Highest ranking from Spanish speaking and immigrant interests (87% good or very good); Lowest responses from CU student groups (48% good or very good)
Place to Raise Youth	71% "good" or "very good" 64% "agree" or "strongly agree" "Boulder community is youth-friendly" - page44, <i>Question 8, table 15</i>	47-58% "good" or "very good"	Lower responses from dialogue participants in all groups
Sense of Community	64% "good" or "very good"	48-60% "good" or "very good"	Lower responses from dialogue participants, particularly Spanish speaking and immigrant interest groups.
Race Relations	37% "good" or "very good" 45% "neither good nor bad" 18% "bad" or "very bad" 58 % "agree" or "strongly agree" "the Boulder community is respectful of people with ethnic differences" -page44, <i>Question 8, table 15</i>	16-21% "good" or "very good" 21-52% "neither good nor bad" 32-55% "bad" or "very bad"	Dialogue participants were much more critical of the city regarding race relations. Fewer Spanish speaking / immigrant interest participants ranked race relations as "bad" or "very bad" (32%) compared with other respondents (45% and 55%).

Table 3: If you were concerned about an issue, how would you communicate with the city?

Issue	Survey Results (<i>page 69, question 19, table 39</i>)	Dialogue Meeting in a Box (MIB) Results (<i>question 5, page 31</i>)	Observation on Similarities and Differences
I would do nothing / my opinion doesn't matter	13% "strongly agree" or "agree" 63% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	17-43% "strongly agree" or "agree" 47-57% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	Much higher response for "do nothing" among dialogue participants especially Spanish speaking / immigrant interest groups (43%).
I would not know what to do to get involved	30-41% "strongly agree" or "agree" 36%-46% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	16-60% "strongly agree" or "agree" 17%-64% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	Much higher response for "not know what to do" among CU students (60%).
I would worry about being part of a conflict by getting involved	12% "strongly agree" or "agree" 65% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	14-38% "strongly agree" or "agree" 33-69% "strongly disagree" or "disagree"	Similar responses in the range of responses for both survey and dialogues, however the Spanish speaking / immigrant groups both reported the highest agreement (38%) and lowest disagreement (33%) with this statement.
I don't have time to get involved	37% "strongly agree" or "agree"	11-49% "strongly agree" or "agree"	37% of general community dialogue participants were in agreement with this statement as well as 37% of survey respondents.
I would contact someone at the city	28-56% "strongly agree" or "agree"	42-74% "strongly agree" or "agree"	Positive responses were higher among dialogue participants however survey respondents were given more options (call, e-mail, write a letter) which may have made a difference in how people responded.
I would attend a City Council meeting	44% "strongly agree" or "agree"	34-57% "strongly agree" or "agree" 57% - community groups 55% - Spanish speaking / immigrant interest groups 34% CU students	Lower survey agreement for attending a City Council meeting, except for CU students.
I would attend a public meeting	54% "strongly agree" or "agree"	39-76% "strongly agree" or "agree"	Wide range of agreement among dialogue participants with survey respondents in the middle of the range.